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NEGLECTED ARABIA

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TYPICAL OMAN SOLDIERS

(See "A Tour to the Pirate Coast.")

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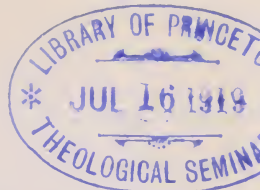
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NEGLECTED ARABIA

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THE ARABIAN MISSION

A Tour to the Pirate Coast

P. W. HARRISON, M.D.

NOTE:—The same letter which brought this article from Bahrein enclosed also a letter from Dr. Harrison dated at Riadh. Readers will recall Dr. Harrison's first visit to this Mohammedan city, 250 miles inland (which was described in the 105th Number of *NEGLECTED ARABIA*) and will hope to hear from him of his second trip to this important centre, only 450 miles from Mecca itself. It is a striking circumstance that one letter should contain the account of a missionary's gaining entrance to two parts of Arabia which have seemed almost inaccessible.

EDITOR.

The Oman Coast in the neighborhood of Debai was one of the friendliest sections of Arabia ten years ago, but for the past five years it has been closed absolutely. Missionary tours did not close it; the game for empire did that and closed it so tightly that for years even Indian Government officials could scarcely set foot upon that soil. The splendid missionary tours of the past were remembered with a sigh but the door seemed locked,—indeed, nailed shut.

However, men will get sick even in the most religious of Mohammedan communities and sick men gravitate toward a doctor, no matter what is his religion or theirs. So gradually there came to be quite a stream of patients from that part of the world to the Mason Memorial Hospital, far away as it was. In these men we saw an opportunity. There are no Arabs anywhere that respond to the appeal of common democratic brotherly friendship as do the Omanees and God eventually used the friendship of these men to open the doors that had been shut so long. Many letters were written to various sheikhs, thanking them for giving us the opportunity of treating their subjects and offering to pay their city a visit for more extensive medical work if it were desired. Constant dripping will wear away a stone. By and by the most powerful sheikhs of them all sent a letter inviting us to come.

The trip took two days in an Arab sailboat and it was a lovely trip. The captain was not at all enthusiastic about taking us at first but he warmed up after a while and became really very friendly. We shared the ship's food and they shared our tea, etc. Life on board an Arab sailboat is a very democratic affair. Your fellow passengers sleep next to you and the smaller they are the "nexter" they get. There are sometimes many reasons for putting your clothes and baggage in the hot sun for a week and scrubbing your own anatomy with a fine comb and an anti-septic solution, after such a trip.

It was like meeting an old friend to get off at Abu Dhabi and sit in the mejlis of Sheikh Hamadan. There rose up visions of tours in the Oman Mountains visited six years before. Here were Arabs with the same untrimmed bushy black beards, each carrying a rifle much as we wear a necktie. A man without it is not dressed for public appearance.



CASTLE OF THE SHEIKH AT ABU DHABI

Here you must eat some Helwa before you drink your coffee. To American taste Helwa is hideous stuff. The man who compared it with sweetened axle grease was not far wrong. However, the missionary on a tour cheerfully eats almost anything and prays that his intestinal machinery may be given strength for the day's work; exceedingly bad medicine, of course, but from the standpoint of the work to be done there is no other way. The cities are all coast towns with the mountains just back of them. The people are pearl fishers. Date palms will grow without irrigation in many places, the subsoil fresh water is so close. No great number is planted, however, as the people prefer the more exciting work of pearl diving. In times gone by all the towns were notorious nests of pirates, but the Pax Brittanica has done away with all that and the only reminders of the old days are the rusty old cannon seen everywhere.

In the way of making friends the trip was a great success. Patients came by hundreds and requests for operations multiplied exceedingly.

First came a few slaves whose masters thought this an excellent time for them to get rid of their hernias. They had such a good time and the matter seemed so simple that many more came, some from far away, and the crowds that assembled to watch the proceedings outclassed clinics at home. However, everybody did well and the work gained a very wide reputation. Some days clinics ran over two hundred. For such enormous crowds all that can be said is that we did the best we could. Other sheikhs invited us after our work in Abu Dhabi was finished. We visited Debai and Sharka and Um el Gowain and even made a short visit to Ras el Kheima. Everywhere the reception was most cordial. We were feasted and honored no end.

Perhaps the most pleasant occurrence of all happened one evening in Sharka after an honorary dinner to which had been invited various sheikhs and notables. One who acted as spokesman asked whether a petition to the mission might be successful in having a medical missionary appointed for permanent work in that region. It was hard to have to tell him that for the present the thing was scarcely possible. The opening seemed tremendous and the need very great. But the best that could be done was to promise a yearly visit unless prevented by some unforeseen contingency, with the hope that the time may soon come when we will have a doctor who can be sent down there.

For indeed Oman does constitute such an opportunity as words fail to convey. The friendliest people in Arabia live there and the most receptive spiritually. As yet they are unspoiled by any considerable contact with Western commerce. One day toward the end of our stay in Abu Dhabi an Arab of an unusually thoughtful type asked me whether we did not have any public religious services on Sunday, which day he understood we observed somewhat as they do Friday. I assured him that we did, but being quite alone as a Christian, even my helpers from Bahrein being Moslems, I had not attempted to hold any. "Well," said this man, "we hope, if you are willing to, you will hold your service this coming Sunday, so we can attend." We had a service that Sunday and with a very appreciative audience. Such a spirit constitutes an opportunity hardly to be duplicated elsewhere in this country and if a strong mission station could be established in the midst of that people, who knows but what prayer and faith and hard work might not soon see the beginnings of the Church of Christ in Arabia. Indeed, we met one man in that same city who seemed to have travelled far on the road toward the Kingdom, and his earnestness in studying the Gospel once he found it, was a refreshment to the soul.

The physical needs, too, are about as great as they well can be. Malaria is everywhere. All sorts of intestinal diseases abound. This is true everywhere in Arabia where date gardens are found, with their shaded land where the sun cannot perform its work as sewage incinerator. There is no end of surgical work waiting to be done. Once organized, a hospital in Debai could probably do a thousand major operations a year and stand without a peer in the Persian Gulf. How much of all this one man can

accomplish would depend entirely on the one man, but it would be a magnificent opportunity.

To the appeal of the spiritual and physical needs of Oman there is to be added that of its social conditions. Perhaps the largest slave community in the world is to be found there. Not all are negroes; many are from Beloochistan, intellectually and morally sometimes the superiors of their masters. It is not the physical wrecks, far past medical or surgical help, that put a mist over your eyes and fill your throat with a hard lump, but a visitor must be more calloused of heart than the medical missionary to listen unmoved when these men tell of hopes long deferred, of manumission papers stolen, of oppression and cruelty, of affection for wife and children that keeps them from trying to get away or brings them



A CORNER OF DEBAI BAZAAR

back after a successful escape. To go down into that country and on the basis of a really competent medical and surgical work to stand as the one man who recognizes the chief of the district as no more than a brother and his meanest slave as no less, is to have an opportunity for real brotherhood that is given to few men. To be the mediator between the old and the new order, a guide of babes who know little of freedom and how to use it, and of all men who are almost equally helpless in the guidance of a free state, such a function most kings and presidents have never attained to. For the new order of things in Oman is coming and probably coming very soon.

"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I, send me.'"

The Hajj

C. STANLEY G. MYLREA, M.D.

"Proclaim to the peoples a pilgrimage. Let them come to thee on foot and on every fleet camel, arriving by every deep defile."

"The pilgrimage to the temple is a service due to God from those who are able to journey thither."—*The Koran*.

Upon every Moslem who would enter Paradise are laid four obligations, which he may not shirk. He must repeat, and the oftener the better, the Kelimah "There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is His prophet." He must pray five times a day. He must give alms to the poor. He must fast between daybreak and sunset during the month of Ramadhan.

There is yet a fifth demand upon the zeal of the Moslem—it is not obligatory but is "a service due to God." Hence every true and devout Moslem cherishes the hope of being able some day to tread the sacred soil of Mecca and worship in the holy precincts of the Beit Allah. He longs to set foot in the place to which, all his life, he has turned his face at the hour of prayer. And so from all the world they come, from China and from Morocco, from Afghanistan and from Russia, from India and the Balkans, and lastly but not least from all over Arabia. Although Mecca is in Arabia and familiarity is said to breed contempt, Arabs yield to none in their reverence for the Holy City and in their eagerness to perform the pilgrimage. It is safe to say that most Arabs have either been to Mecca or intend to go there some day. Before the war the popular route for the dwellers in the Persian Gulf was by water to Jidda in the Red Sea and from Jidda the short camel journey to Mecca was comparatively easy. This was the route followed by most if not all of the Europeans who have schemed their way into the city of Mohammed, at one time or another. Since the war broke out, however, steamers have been too busy to carry pilgrims and the overland routes have once more become alive with travellers, and in the words of the Koran, the Hajjis have been arriving on foot and on fleet camels—not always fleet.

Now the Hajj must be performed in "the month of the pilgrimage," the last month of the year, and since the Mohammedan year is lunar, your travels may take you across the desert in midsummer! It was the 8th of August last year when the Kuweit party under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmed, the heir to the Kuweit throne, left for Mecca. I decided to get up early and watch the start from the open ground behind the town. The whole place was dotted with little groups of people making their final preparations and the air rang with the wailing of camels, protesting as is their wont against having anything put on their backs. I

accosted the first likely man I saw, "When is Sheikh Ahmed leaving?" "Tomorrow" was the unexpected reply. I tried a second party with the same question. "In half an hour" was the answer and on cross-examination he added "The Sheikh is even now setting out from the castle." I went up to yet a third gentleman and sought his opinion but he was utterly indifferent and merely stated phlegmatically, "By God, I haven't the least idea." It does not sound nearly so profane in Arabic as it does in English.

Somewhat disappointed at not seeing anything worth seeing, I rode across to another part of the maidan, where in the distance I had made out a large number of camels and found to my delight no less a person than Sheikh Ahmed himself sitting holding his court, as calm as a May morning and looking as though he had not the smallest intention of leaving for anywhere for an indefinite period. As I approached, two or three slaves ran up to hold my horse and at the same time the Sheikh, always the gentleman, rose to greet me. We sat down together and I once more started my enquiries, this time at the fountain head. I now learned that the Sheikh's party would start in the afternoon, only journeying a short distance the first day in order to get the caravan into working trim. From time to time, while we chatted, groups of camels were brought up for inspection and approval, and not far off, stuck in the ground, was the Sheikh's special pilgrim flag, a large crimson standard with "Kuweit" embroidered on it in white letters.

As we parted the Sheikh said he hoped to see me as he called at the Consul's house in the afternoon to make his final good-byes before setting out in real earnest. In the afternoon I accordingly turned up at the Consulate in plenty of time to see the splendid caravan ride up to the house. The camels were a perfect blaze of color and I longed for a "kinemato-color" or whatever it is they call the particular kind of "movie" that takes in colors. The Sheikh and his special suite, having dismounted, entered the house and while coffee, cigarettes and cold drinks were being handed round we discussed the prospects of the travellers. It was midsummer and terribly hot; there were certain sections of the road which were waterless for days and strict rationing would be necessary. However, as far as possible, they would travel by night, and thank God they had a waxing moon. One of the pilgrims, a wealthy Kuweit merchant, was the subject of a good deal of merriment and the butt of many jests. He was absolutely an arm-chair man and rather than face the fatigue of camel riding for a month, or the best part of a month, he had a special palanquin built. This was swung on a camel and our sybarite would recline at his ease. I did not actually see the machine as our friend had sent it on ahead, not having the courage to leave the town in it.

After a while the fleet of desert ships weighed anchor and rocked off into the horizon and out of sight. There must have been about two hundred camels and some thirty of the pilgrims were women who were accommodated in special roofed-in, covered-up boxes, so that the fair occu-

pants were quite invisible. We heard of their progress from time to time from men of the road, and finally, wonder of wonders (to the Arab), came the wire that all had reached Mecca and were being royally entertained by King Hussein. Later on a second wire came to the effect that the Kuwait party had celebrated the great festival, the Id-el-Atha, which is held on the 10th day of the month of the Pilgrimage. The message reached here on what was regarded in Kuwait as the 9th day and a good deal of adverse criticism arose, for the real orthodox Moslem holds that a new month does not commence until the moon is actually seen in the sky. It was obvious, however, that the more civilized Meccans were following the infidel's calendar and had begun the month of the Hajj before they saw the moon.

On October 29th the Hajjis returned and were feted by all. We learned many amusing things. First, they had been held up by a party of raiders outside Mecca and a large sum of money besides their best clothes had been taken from them. This was very hard on the nerves of some and our friend of the palanquin was said to have beaten a very ignominious retreat, for bullets were whistling in every direction from the rocky sides of the deep defile through which they were passing and the locality was anything but healthy. Arrived in Mecca, the matter was reported to King Hussein who forthwith sent for the chiefs of the offending tribes and made them disgorge to the last handkerchief and dollar. On the quiet, however, Sheikh Ahmed sent the money back to the robbers, who probably still think him a first-class fellow. Our friend of the palanquin had had enough of cross country riding, his nerve was gone, and he went down to Jidda, took a steamer for Bombay and so returned to Kuwait by the safer and simpler pathway of the sea.

There was great excitement here when it was known that the Hajjis' caravan was nearing home. One day two special messengers arrived with word from Sheikh Ahmed that he would reach Jahreh, a small town some fifteen miles from Kuwait, at a given time and it was not long before the road to Jahreh was crowded with people going out to welcome the wanderers. In addition a large boat was got ready and loaded with a ten-course dinner for all. (I suppose the Sheikh of Kuwait paid for this.) This boat reached Jahreh safely and I understand there was a very merry time at the banquet. The day after the arrival at Jahreh there was a leisurely entry into Kuwait and thus came to an end one of the most noteworthy pilgrimages in the history of this city.

Moslem Funeral Customs

MRS. DIRK DYKSTRA

Bahrein, like all other places in the Gulf, has been visited by the epidemic, Spanish influenza, and the number of deaths daily, though very much less than in some other towns, has been considerable. At times such as these we learn a great deal about their customs connected with death and burial and their belief about the future. It is difficult to get a definite idea about it all; in fact, that is not possible, for most of their practices and statements are based on traditions of which there are no end, and there are many different sects, divisions and nationalities in Islam, each of which adds its own interpretations to these traditions and alters them to suit its own particular bent or persuasion. Locally our information comes from Shiah and Sunni sources and of these the Shiahs, in this as in all things, are much more superstitious and spectacular. This article does not claim to give all the information there is to be had on this subject, some of it may not agree with the practices in other Moslem fields, perhaps not even with those in the other stations in our field, and some of the statements may seem contradictory, but that is not uncommon in the teaching and traditions of Islam.

When it is apparent that a sick person is about to die, if it is at all possible he is made to give the testimony, or "shehadeh," as it is called, which is, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is the prophet of God." Those Moslems who are at all seriously minded are very careful and faithful in the observance of this practice, and they do not hesitate to strike or pull the dying one so as to arouse the departing spirit sufficiently to repeat this creed. If anyone dies unattended the central thought of regret is that no one took the "witness" from the dead. Another thing that is done to the dying is to pour water into the mouth, which is the dying one's sustenance on his journey to the other world. Sometimes large quantities are administered so that choking results. Then before life is extinct they begin to straighten out the limbs and to stretch them, tying the two big toes together. Moslem etiquette demands that when people meet each other and stop to speak, the feet should be placed side by side with the toes in a straight line. And so at death Moslems prepare the corpse in such a way that when the departed meets his Lord his feet will be in the correct position. When death has finally come, the women at once begin to wail and to cry out in high shrill voices.

The Moslems believe that a corpse must be brought to the grave as quickly as possible in order to speed the spirit on its way to the other world, and so all preparations for a funeral are made at once and quickly. This belief that a spirit must be speeded on its way makes it a meritorious and praiseworthy act to hurry things and with all the funerals we see the bearers are always going very fast, sometimes running. A sad result of

this excessive haste is that funerals are sometimes interrupted by the supposedly dead person coming to life again and without doubt, because of this custom, many are buried alive. But especially do Moslems hurry a funeral if it is near sunset, for they do not like to bury after that time. In times of an epidemic, necessity forces them to depart from this custom, the main reason perhaps being to keep secret the number of deaths, but ordinarily they dislike evening or night burials. One reason given is that the cemetery must not be allowed to say, "It is my dinner," or it will demand a corpse every night. They do not explain, however, why the cemetery does not demand a breakfast on the same principle! Another reason they give for not burying after sunset is that, unless the corpse is watched, something called "zaubainee" will come and eat it, or that the "jinns" will come and take it away. Sometimes, if a person dies late in the evening, the corpse is carried to the cemetery and left there all night so as to be as near as possible to its final destination and someone is appointed to watch it.



FUNERAL OF A PLAGUE VICTIM

During an epidemic all corpses must be washed at the general washing place adjoining the mosque, if possible. At other times he who dies in his own house, which is his personal property, can be lawfully washed there before carried away to the grave, but if the deceased dies in a house not his own he must be washed at the general washing place. This washing of the body is a matter of great importance because the body must be thoroughly purified and made presentable for the interviews that await it. The corpse is washed and scrubbed with scrupulous care, soap and other cleansing agents being freely used. Especial attention is paid to the ears, eyes, nose, teeth and nails. There are men and women who are publicly recognized as washers of the dead and for this work they receive payment according to the financial condition of the deceased. After the washing comes the shrouding and perfuming of the body. To the words of our Saviour, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on,"

for the Moslem's benefit we might add, "Nor yet for your burial wherewithal ye shall be shrouded." With some Moslems part of a bride's trousseau is a piece of cloth for her shroud and this she carefully guards lest future circumstances might leave her unprovided for. Most of the women here wear or own a special nose jewel and with many this is dedicated to defray the cost of a shroud. Some women, even though altogether destitute, can still be seen wearing this jewel and it is the last piece that they will part with in life so that they may have the benefit of it in death. The reason for all this care about the shroud can be appreciated only when we realize that the Moslems believe that the shroud is their covering in the next world. Therefore it is neither wise nor kind to provide for anyone when he dies, unless there is absolutely nothing to be realized from any of his possessions, however little that may be, because the credit for the shroud will go to him who has provided it while it will leave the one who has been provided for without any covering before his Lord. And because this winding sheet will be their covering in the next world it must be without spot or blemish, for whatever defilement is in it here will appear there. We had an illustration of this last year when in a shooting affair a man was killed. The accident happened near sunset and as usual they set about to bury the dead man at once, but he bled so long and so continuously that it was several hours before he could be properly washed, shrouded and buried.

Accompanying the shrouding is the perfuming the body, the amount varying according to different sects and wealth. Spicy herbs, incense and powders are some of the most common in use. The winding sheet is slit so as to lend itself to proper and secure winding and then the top and the bottom are tied much as we tie a sack of wheat. The Shiah's untie the winding sheet after the corpse has been placed in position in the grave so that the dead body can move about to pray. The rosary is put under the head and a cake of mud from holy Kerbela is placed near at hand. If the forehead rests on this holy mud during the prostrations in prayer the prayers will be much more efficacious. Two date branches are placed alongside the corpse, one at each side of the body, to serve as crutches to the dead for getting up to pray. The Shiah's also put some sand in the mouth of the corpse, which is its confession to its Lord that it was made of dust and must return to dust. In connection with their belief as to their covering in the next world there is a tradition that man's covering before the fall was of the material of which our finger nails are made, but when he fell this was gradually taken away from him and only the nails were left to remind him of what he once was before the fall and they are a promise to him of what his covering will again be in the next world. This very probably explains why the waste nails are so carefully disposed of. On Friday, the Moslem Sunday, nails are trimmed, great care being taken not to lose any of them, and these are then wrapped up in a piece of cloth and buried, and as they do so the Shiah's say, "Take your due, O devil, and the compassionate one will testify against you."

Then on the resurrection day God will require all these nail-trimmings, and woe to him who has not carefully preserved them.

There are no undertakers in Arabia. Near the washing place there are always several biers which any can use. These and the flat stones necessary to build up the grave are supplied by voluntary contribution by those who have the means to do so and who want to lay up merit. The bier resembles a ladder and as a rule the corpse of a man is placed on this bier without any covering besides a mat or wrap around the shroud. A woman's bier differs from a man's in that a fitted railing about a foot high, with corner posts, is placed around the bier and when the corpse is placed on it the whole is covered with a large cloth. It is great merit to help carry a bier even though but for a few paces, but there are always noticeably more bearers at the funeral of a rich and influential man than at that of a poor man. The Sunnis have no prayers or ceremony at their funerals. After placing the body in position in the grave, they put in place, at the head and feet, the two stones called the "shehadeh," witness. The Shiahs, after the body has been washed, carry it to the mosque, where they have prayers outside, standing west of the building, because that is towards Mecca. In Bahrein the men usually stand in three rows, though it is said that there may also be five or seven rows, but the number must be uneven. The corpse is placed on the ground before them while the men all face west and say prayers for the dead. The numbers of these vary, as also later at the grave, according to the station and financial condition of the deceased. Prayers are the same for men and women and are said for all who are ten years and older. Women do not follow a corpse to the grave at any time except for two or three who, in the case of a dead woman, must place the corpse in the grave and undo the winding sheet. When carrying the bier the Shiahs, as much as possible, try to keep the head towards the north.

As has been said, the corpse must be carried quickly. The bearers are constantly exchanging places, those who relieve beginning at the front and all are thus gradually worked towards the back, and these again in turn run forwards and begin anew there. All chant together as they walk hurriedly, "*La illahu illa allah wa Mohammed er-rasoul allah,*" "There is no God but God and Mohammed is the prophet of God." When the grave is reached the bier is placed on the ground and the bearers sit down waiting for the body to be properly placed. Previously to this the grave has been dug, the length of the body being measured with a stick. The upper part of the grave is about four by six feet, and three feet deep. In the center a trench is dug which is about a foot and a half or two feet wide and deep. In this the body is placed on its side, facing Mecca, and the winding sheet is unfastened so that the dead man can sit up to pray and to be interviewed. If there happens to be a grave of older date where the new one is being dug, any bones remaining are carelessly put aside and when the new corpse has been placed in position the bones of the former corpse are thrown into the trench with the fresh corpse.

When the body has been placed in position in this trench, large flat stones are placed over the top of it, forming a roof, and in this roof is left a small hole about as big as an orange. Then the mullah bends down over this hole and instructs the dead as follows: "Oh, A——, when the interviewing angels come, say 'God is my God, Mohammed is my prophet, Ali is my redeemer, the Koran is my book and Mecca is my kibla.'" (Kibla means the place to which one turns when praying.) Then after a bit this mullah, personifying the dead man and speaking in the first person, replies, "I witness that God is my God, Mohammed is my prophet, Ali is my redeemer, the Koran is my book and Mecca is my kibla," and



FUNERAL OF A PROMINENT MOHAMMEDAN

immediately when the last word is uttered a handful of plaster is slammed over the hole so as to keep the testimony in the grave. Then the grave is filled and built up, in some cases quite neatly, and the stones of testimony are put in place. Water is poured over the grave and serves two purposes, the one is to cool the departed spirit and the other is for the bearers who gather around the grave while the ground is wet, and all put their fingers into the mud while they say prayers for the dead. After this helwa, dates and bread are distributed to all present and after they have eaten they go to their homes.

When the bearers have gone away from the grave about forty paces, two angels called Nakir and Munkir come to interview the dead man. First they smell of his feet and if there is on them the smell of sacred soil, especially that of holy Kerbela, the owner of said feet need pass no

further examination. But if these feet have not gone on a pilgrimage to these holy cities the dead man must be interviewed. Each member of the body is then questioned separately as to what it has done or not done, the central thought in every question being whether the laws of Islam have been observed. If the dead man answers badly or incorrectly he is severely beaten, so much perhaps as to make the bones of the body crack, but if the answers are correct he receives no punishment. After this interview all are passed on and at this point the statements of the Moslems become very hazy, uncertain and contradictory. Some say that the dead go on to heaven and that on the resurrection morning God takes them out of heaven again, whither it is not stated, and then compels them to walk over the straight way which is as narrow as a hair and which is the bridge between heaven and hell, and those whose good deeds exceed their evil ones will pass over safely, but those whose deeds have been evil will fall off and into hell-fire, supposedly forever; but here too is contradiction, for every Moslem expects to inherit Paradise some day and this is generally taught when they say that all who have given the testimony will enter this blessed abode. There are others who believe that the souls of the dead pass on to a sort of a purgatory where they remain for shorter or longer periods according to their faithfulness in repeating their prayers while living and especially according to the number of prayers which their friends repeat for them after they are dead. All the Shiah have some definite prayers for the dead immediately after the funeral. Those who have means to pay for the same at once erect a hut over the grave and a mullah reads from the Koran as long as the relatives wish or can afford. This mullah reads almost continuously but when anyone passes by he must wait till this party is out of hearing, otherwise the credit of those words will go the passer-by and not to the dead man. If there are no prayers at the grave some one or more pray for the dead at the house and many all during the year visit the cemetery, particularly on Thursday, and pray at the graves of their own dead, or if they wish to obtain merit, over any grave, such a prayer securing a double blessing, one for the living and one for the occupant of the grave. The graves are usually decorated with small white shells, the kind which they use to beautify their compounds, and others bring food, spices and perfumes to the graves because these will give pleasure to the departed spirits in the other world. Also water is poured over the graves which cools the spirits which are in torment. This deed is in support of the theory that there is a purgatory and though the Sunni Moslems do not do these things, they do say that it is not good to weep for a child of eight years or less because each tear is as fat to the fire to that soul in torment. All Moslems have some prayers for the dead at some time or other and they also have distribution of food in the name of the dead. There is a set day for this in the Moslem calendar which is called "yaum el-nafeleh," which is "the day of supererogatory deeds." Such prayers and almsgiving are additional merit for the dead who may perchance be a bit short in their account with God.

Mourning is not strictly observed by any except widows and that is an act of necessity rather than choice. They are not allowed to come out of the house for a period of four months and ten days and during all that time they are not allowed to see any man except an immediate relative; their dress is of blue cloth and no jewels or other decorations are worn. This is a very strict law in Islam and is generally observed whether the husband who has died was faithful or unfaithful, according to the Moslem interpretation of that term. A man consoles himself after the death of his wife or wives by taking unto himself another, sometimes within a week. The usual mourning of the family is from three to seven days during which time friends are expected to call on them. If they fail to do so the family is deeply offended. For all but widows, black is the usual color for mourning.

The following is quoted from Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, on the burial of a "wali" or holy man. "Very often, it is said, a 'wali' impels the bearers to a particular spot. The following anecdote, describing an ingenious mode of puzzling a dead saint in a case of this kind, was related to me by one of my friends. Some men were lately bearing the corpse of a 'wali' to a tomb prepared for it in the great cemetery on the north of the metropolis, but on arriving at the gate called Babu'n-Nasr, which leads to the cemetery, they found themselves unable to proceed farther, from the cause above-mentioned. 'It seems,' said one of the bearers, 'that the sheikh is determined not to be buried in the cemetery of Babu'n-Nasr, and what shall we do?' They were all much perplexed, but being as obstinate as the dead saint himself they did not immediately yield to his caprice. Retreating a few paces and then advancing with a quick step, they thought by such an impetus to force the corpse through the gateway, but their efforts were unsuccessful and the same experiment they repeated several times. They then placed the bier on the ground to rest and to consult, and one of them, beckoning away his comrades to a distance beyond the hearing of the dead saint, said to them, 'Let us take up the bier again, and turn it around several times till the sheikh becomes dizzy; he then will not know in what direction we are going, and we may take him easily through the gate.' This they did; the saint was puzzled as they expected and quietly buried in the place he had so striven to avoid."



Abraham Renounces Idolatry

REV. G. D. VAN PEURSEM.

The following is a translation of an Arabic copy of "The Story of the Prophets." This book might be described as "The Child's Bible of the Arabs." An Arab friend told me it was written for the illiterate and the children. All Arabs read it and most of them believe it; some know the stories by heart. What is related in these stories goes to amplify the truths (?) of the Koran. In this way the abstract statements become concrete and comprehensible.

The following shows how Abraham renounced idolatry. After relating many stories of the mysterious birth of the prophet, the thread continues: When Abraham, upon whom be peace, grew up, being still in the cave, he said, "Who is my Lord, mother?" She said, "I." He said, "Who is your Lord?" She said, "Your Father." He said, "Who is the Lord of my Father?" She said, "Nimrod." He said, "Who is the Lord of Nimrod?" She said, "Keep still." And he kept quiet. Then she turned to her husband and said, "Have you seen the boy who relates that he shall change the religion of the people of the earth? And verily, he is your son." She informed him of all he told her. Thereupon his father, Aazar, came to him, and Abraham, upon whom be peace, said, "O my father, who is my Lord?" He said, "Your mother." He said, "Who is the Lord of my mother?" He said, "I." He said "Who is your Lord?" He said, "Nimrod." He said, "Who is the Lord of Nimrod?" Then he slapped him a good one and said: "Be still!"

After that Abraham said to his parents, "Take me away." And they removed him from the cave and departed until the setting sun. Then Abraham looked upon the camel, the cow, the sheep and the horse, which were being led along. He asked his father, "What are these?" He said "A camel, a horse, a cow and a sheep." Then he said "Is it not necessary that they shall have a Lord Creator?" Then he beheld and thought about the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and said, "Surely He who created me, fed me and gave me drink is my Lord. I have no Lord beside Him." Then he looked and behold, Jupiter had arisen, by some called Venus. That night was the last of the month. Now he saw the star before the moon and he said, "This is my Lord." But when he saw it disappear he said, "I do not like the things that disappear." And when he saw the moon peep through he said, "This is my Lord." But when it disappeared he said, "Surely unless the Lord lead me I shall be of the people who go astray." When he saw the sun peep through he said, "That is my Lord. This is the greatest." He noticed that the light was stronger. But when it also disappeared he said, "O people, I have no part in your idolatrous worship. I have turned my face to Him who created the heavens and the earth. I am true and not of the idolators."

Some said his father was making idols. Pressing Abraham to himself he began to make idols and gave them to Abraham to sell. And Abraham, upon whom be peace, went out with them and called to those who were to buy, "Buy what does not benefit nor injure you!" But no one bought of him and when they became burdensome he went with them to a river, and, bending their heads, said, "Drink! There is no demand for you!" He was mocking his people with regard to their error and ignorance to the extent that his voice and his mocking spread among his own people and the people of the village. His people argued with him about his religion. Said he: "Do you argue with me about Allah?" He contended with them and overcame them in the argument. Then Abraham invited his father Aazar to his religion. He said: "O father, why do you worship that which does not hear nor see, that which does not benefit you in the least?" But his father refused to answer the invitation. Then Abraham, upon whom be peace, showed his people his abhorrence to what they were worshipping. And he explained his religion and said, "Do you perceive what you worship as did your fathers and your ancestors? For all objects of worship are my enemies except the Lord of Creation." They said, "What do you worship?" He said, "The Lord of the universe." And they said, "Do you mean the king?" He answered, "No, He who created me and leads me." Now this spread among men so that proud Nimrod got news of it. He called Abraham and said, "O Abraham, have you seen your Allah who sent you and to whom you invite men? Do you remember what His power is by which you might exalt him above other gods?" Abraham said, "My Lord is He that maketh alive and causeth death." Nimrod said, "I can cause death and make alive." Abraham said, "How?" The king said, "I shall take two men worthy of death in my judgment. I shall kill one of them. By that I shall cause him to die. Then I shall pardon the other and leave him. By this I shall cause him to live." Whereupon Abraham said, "But Allah leads the sun from the East and again brings it from the West." By this Nimrod was stunned and answered him not a word. The argument settled him.

Then Abraham wished to show his people the weakness and impotence of the idols which they were worshipping in the place of Allah. For this he sought argument. He manufactured an opportunity and knew so to manage it that he was present at the feast where they were accustomed to gather every year. When they returned from the feast they went to the idols for worship and then returned home. Now when that feast came round Abraham's father said to him, "Abraham, if you come with us to the feast you will be pleased with our religion." And Abraham went with them. But when he was on the way he threw himself down and said, "I am ill. My feet trouble me." But they ran away, he being cast down. Now when they passed on he cried to the last, for the weaker ones remained behind, "I swear by Allah, I shall outwit your idols yet if you turn your backs on me in

flight." They heard this from him. Other authorities claim that Abraham spoke this in secret, unknown to the people, and no one heard it but one of them and he told on him. Some say that Abraham, upon whom be peace, returned from the way to the house of the idols. Now in the house is a river, and facing the entrance of the river a large idol, and close in order smaller ones, up to the entrance of the river. They had food prepared and laid before the gods, and they said, "When it is time for our return we will come back and eat,—our food having been blessed by the gods." And when Abraham, upon whom be peace, looked upon the gods and what was before them by way of food, he said to them, by way of mocking, "Do you not eat?" When they did not answer he said, "Why do you not speak?" And he outwitted them, beating them with his right hand, and with an axe broke them in pieces until no one remained but the largest of them, upon whose head he hung the axe. After this he went out.

When the people returned from the feast to the house of the gods and saw them in this state they said, "Who has done this with our gods? Surely one of the evil people!" Some said, "We have heard a boy mention them, Abraham by name, who we think did this." This then came to the ears of the proud Nimrod and the nobles of the people, who said, "Bring him before the eyes of the people, perhaps they may testify against him, saying it is he who did this." But they detested taking him without evidence. Others said, "Perhaps the people can inform us what to do with him, for we shall punish him." Now when they brought him forth they said, "Abraham, did you do this to our gods?" Abraham said, "Nay, the biggest of them did it. That one was angry because you worship, along with him, these small idols, while he is the greatest of them, and he broke them. But ask them, if they are able to speak." (The prophet, upon whom be peace, said, "Abraham did not lie, except three times, all of them concerning Allah, the Highest: his saying, "I am ill," and, "Nay, but the greatest did this," and his saying to the king who was presented to Sarah, "She is my sister.") Now when Abraham said this to them, they turned to their own and said, "Surely you are treating this man unjustly in your questionings. As for these your gods, what was done to them is evident. Ask them." And that was the saying of Abraham, "Then ask them, if they can speak." And the people said, "We do not find but as he said." Now when it was told them, "Surely you are unjust in the worshipping of your idols, this big one with the small," they bent their heads, perplexed at the affair. They understood now that they could not speak nor make an attack and they said, "Did you know that they could not speak?"

Now when the argument turned against them and for Abraham, upon whom be peace, he said to them, "Do you worship besides Allah that which does not benefit nor hurt you? Woe unto you! Why do you worship that which is not Allah? Do you not think?" And when

the argument gripped them and they were unable to answer they said, "Burn him and rescue the gods, if you are up to this thing!" Another authority has said, "Allah caused the earth to swallow him up and he shall be shaken in it until the Day of Resurrection." He said also, "When Nimrod and his people agreed on the burning of Abraham, upon whom be peace, they imprisoned him in a house, and built for him a house like a fold." This same authority continues, "They were gathering wood for a month, so that wood increased greatly and they took from it what they wished and started fire in every quarter where there was wood. The fire grew to such a degree that should a bird pass by it would burn up because of the intensity of the heat." Then they repaired to Abraham, upon whom be peace, and lifted him to the top of the house and bound him. Thereupon they took a battering ram, at the advice of Satan; may Allah curse him. Since they were not able to cast him in the fire, because of the intensity of the heat, they took the battering ram and put him in it, bound and shackled, the prayers of Allah be upon him. And the heavens and the earth shouted, the hills, angels and all creation, except the demons, with one cry, "O Lord, there is no one who worships Thee but Abraham, and he is to be burned with fire. But allow us to rescue him." Then said Allah, "If he desires aid of you, then give it and it will rescue him. I give you permission, and if no one else give him help, I will know about it and I shall be his deliverer. Leave it between him and me."

And when they wished to throw him in the fire, the angel of waters said, "If you wish I shall smoulder the fire, for the supply of water and rain is all in my hands." And the guardian of the wind came to him and said, "If you wish I will cause the fire to fly in the wind." And Abraham, upon whom be peace, said, "I have no need of you." Then he lifted his head to heaven and said, "O Allah, Thou art the one in heaven and on earth. There is no one on earth who worships Thee besides me." Abraham, upon whom be peace, when they bound him and threw him into the fire said, "There is no Allah besides Thee. Thy name be praised. Lord of the universe! Thine is praise and power. Thou hast no associate." Then they threw the battering ram, with Abraham in it, into the fire, in a remote place. And Gabriel, upon whom be peace, approached Abraham and said, "Abraham, are you in any need?" But he said, "As for you, no." Gabriel said, "Ask Allah, thy Lord!" And Abraham said, "The sufficiency of my asking is known to him. He knows my condition. Allah is my sufficiency and the most excellent of helpers."

And the news about Abraham is that he was saved by the saying, "Allah is my sufficiency, and He is the best of helpers." Allah, the exalted and magnified, said, "O fire, be cold and be peace to Abraham!" One authority has pointed out that if He had not said, "Peace," Abraham would have died of the cold, and there would not be any fire left on the earth, for it would have been extinguished altogether.

Educational Work in Basrah

MISS CHARLOTTE B. KELLIEN.

The opening bell had rung and the pupils of the School of High Hope marched in, not very martially, we fear, but still with evident satisfaction, to sing their morning song. After this came a brief prayer and then the roll call, which, to the uninitiated, sounded like anything but the names of a "fairy garden of girls." Like a garden they were in their bright many-colored garments as Arabs, Persians, Turks, Armenians, Jews responded to the strange appellations; but we missed the friendly smile and flashing teeth of our one "Topsy" who had all the color of her famous ancestress but, fortunately for discipline, none of her mischievous traits. One of those present volunteered the information that she did not intend to come any more, so at recess we went in search of her, not as a truant officer sallies forth in righteous indignation to bring the offender to judgment, but from an earnest longing to see a real education have a chance to play its part in the moulding of this handful of Arabia's daughters.

We found her home, a small mud hut opening on a court, which was shared by neighbor women, babies, dogs, cats and chickens alike. Here, sitting on a clean grass mat and partaking of the inevitable cup of hospitality, we learned from our pupil's mother the news, apparently as unwelcome to the girl as to us, of her engagement. Although she was not to be married for "a long time,"—the long time in this case being about two months!—she could not come to school any more because the other pupils would tease her, and besides it was not the proper thing for an engaged girl to appear in the streets every day. Doubtless the thought that with the chief goal of desire in sight an education was a trivial thing, was present in their minds, but out of deference to our profession they suppressed it. Knowing how large a place the subject of matrimony occupies in the thoughts and conversation of the girls outside school hours, we were not sorry, except for her own sake, to have the disturbing figure of a bride-elect withdrawn, since no plea of hers or ours would induce her parents to allow her to enjoy her girlhood a little longer. "Was she not fifteen years old, and although of course she did not know her future husband at all, they say he is good to his mother and, if God wills, he will be good to her also." So easily is parental solicitude satisfied and thus suddenly do our girls leave the school fold for a life that for most of them has little of romance or lasting happiness. Each wedding in our circle, however, makes us realize afresh how fleeting is our opportunity and redouble our efforts so to teach the girls that they shall in time demand and deserve a home whose cornerstone is love and sympathy.

This work of teaching in the mission field is not limited to the hours spent in the school room; the homes must be visited and the mother and older sisters cultivated, so that our pupils shall not bring their new learning into a totally alien atmosphere. A common interest in the children forms a bond of union between hostess and visitor and by frequent visits opportunity is given for explaining the truths of our religion, concerning which they consider themselves wise and are woefully ignorant. In this way educational work may have a direct influence on the whole family as well as an indirect one through the pupil's importation of new and helpful ideas.

In this visiting we come upon many tragedies and when we know something of the background of the girls' lives we cannot wonder that it takes a long time for higher ideals to win their way. One old grandmother, in the presence of the little children, lamented the fact that her son was wasting his substance on a worthless woman whom he was supporting in another part of the town, leaving the wife alone with the care and responsibility of their four children. That they were not too young to understand the full import of their elders' conversation was shown by the remark of a little girl of nine that because her father had spent all his money on this theatrical woman they would have to give up their big house and move to another part of the city, so far away that she would be unable to come to school.

Another girl, about thirteen years old, very sweet and pretty, came back to us after being married and divorced and her joy in school life is pathetic to see. She is too dull to learn much, but that such a little piece of human driftwood should persist in coming in spite of many obstacles, makes us hope that even if her education is more or less of a failure from an intellectual standpoint, her spiritual faculties will be awakened and fed. And yet there are so many undercurrents of evil threatening her best growth—undercurrents that touch sheltered girlhood in a Christian land not at all—that one wonders how the spark of ambition continues to burn even dimly. Her parents had been divorced and shortly after the mother had taken a new husband family quarrels arose, and a sister brought to us the tale that the man had married the mother only in the hope of eventually winning the young daughter by fair means or foul. The child knew all this, knew also that after deserting the mother he had announced his intention of returning to chloroform the family at night and then to kidnap her. The threat, fortunately, he was unable to execute, but that such lurid incidents have a place in these young lives militates against progress in their studies while it increases the need for something high and noble to counteract the low and base.

The difference between a Christian institution and a Moslem environment can be measured only by those who have breathed the air of Islam and seen the effect of its poison on body and mind and spirit. To the

girls their school is a place where personal cleanliness is insisted upon; where lying and impure words are not tolerated; where music and healthful games and exercises give enjoyment and recreation; where a mental blank becomes a mind; and above all else we intend it to be a place where the needs of the spirit are emphasized and Jesus Christ set forth as the highest example and pattern of character. This work with the children must be first of all a ministry of love, and the friendships formed in the class room before prejudice and intolerance have made them suspect the message and the messenger, are very deep and lasting and assure the missionary of a warm welcome in the houses which the pupils represent.

"He that ploweth must plow in hope," and we have as our incentive the hope that the Lord Jesus may come into His own in these young hearts and be the inspiration and controlling power in the new homes which they go out from us to found. Thus will His Kingdom come in Arabia.

To Arabia

MISS FRANCES M. THOMS

Arabia, thou art my land, my home;
I scarce can wish but what I long for thee.
First light of day, first moon and stars I saw
Were thine. First mother's smile and fatherly
Cares I sensed in thee. My love of God
In part is love for thee, Arabia!
I knew the desert islands of Bahrein,
Where beauteous pearls are sought and found and sold
With souls of countless price, and rare. Barefoot
I ran the sandy beach to gather shells;
Of shifting sands built cities manned with bits
Of drift-wood bleached; and dipped with childish fear
Into the shallow edge of endless sea.
Gardens I saw in Maskat and Bahrein;
Saw graceful palms of Basrah stoop and bend
O'er dank canals. I loved the rugged crags
On Oman's coast; the thunderous howl and war
Of cruel waves that beat relentlessly
Upon those stalwart rocks that will not yield.
I loved thee all in all and love thee still.
Beyond thy sand-driv'n coast and barren crags
I see a land of worth—my promised land,
My choice forevermore, I long, I long
For thee, my heart's desire—Arabia.

Missionary Personalia

Rev. Samuel M. Zwemer received from Rutgers College at its Commencement in June of this year, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity, in still further token of the esteem in which he is held in the academic community that knows him so well and in appreciation of the continuing services that he is rendering to the Church which he has so long and so ably served.

Dr. Zwemer brings his work in America to a close in early July and is expecting to sail for England late in that month. He will spend August in Great Britain and France, returning to Cairo in September. Mrs. Zwemer will remain in this country with the children, her residence being at Holland, Michigan.

Rev. and Mrs. F. J. Barny are remaining in India at present and are assisting the Arcot Mission in the time of its present special emergency. They are residing in Madanapalle cooperating in the Educational Work centering at that important Station.

Rev. G. J. Pennings, in present service with the Y. M. C. A. working among the British troops in Mesopotamia, has been stationed for some time at Baiji, a Camp at the end of the railroad running north from Baghdad towards Mosul. He has been in charge of the work among the British troops here and at the railroad in another camp not far distant. The Army is to begin Educational Work soon, of which Mr. Pennings is to be placed in charge.

Rev. and Mrs. D. Dykstra, prior to their summer vacation in India, are planning a visit to Kateef so as to link up the Evangelistic Work with that of the Medical Staff as introduced by Dr. and Mrs. Harrison who have recently been on a visit to Kateef.

Rev. and Mrs. Henry A. Bilkert and Miss Van Pelt are spending their summer vacation in India.

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